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U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education

Written Testimony of:

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Siren, Wisconsin

On Behalf of:

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Dean Roland and I serve as Sheriff of Burnett County, Wisconsin. I am also a member of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, a national anti-crime organization of more than 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, attorneys general, other law enforcement leaders, and victims of violence who have come together to take a hard-nosed look at what really works to keep kids from becoming criminals.

As a sheriff, I know there is no substitute for tough law enforcement and dangerous criminals need to be locked up. But I also know that arrest and incarceration alone will not reduce our communities' crime problems. My own experience tells me, and research proves, that targeted investments in kids that help them get the right start in life can help prevent them from turning to gangs, drugs, and crime in the future.

My colleagues from FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS and I appreciate the difficult job this Committee faces in allocating scarce resources in the face of enormous fiscal challenges. But in these difficult times we cannot afford to short-change programs that have been proven to work. Now more than ever, our families and communities need these programs. Further, our future safety, and our Nation's long-term fiscal well-being, will be improved through these crucial investments.

Early Childhood Care and Education

A child's earliest years are crucial to his or her development. High-quality early care and education for at-risk kids during those critical early years not only can help close the achievement gap, but reduces the child's likelihood of committing a crime later in life, as well.

For example, at-risk kids left out of Chicago's Child-Parent Centers, government-funded early education programs similar to Head Start which served 100,000 three-and-four-year-olds, were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18, according to a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The study also found that those left out were 67 percent more likely to be held back a grade in school, and 71 percent more likely to have been placed in special education.

Another study, conducted by Schweinhart, et al. in 1993, found that at-risk kids who were left out of high quality High/Scope Perry Preschool program were five times more likely to be chronic offenders with five or more arrests by age 27. By age 40, those who did not attend the Perry Preschool program were more than twice as likely to become career offenders with more than 10 arrests, and twice as likely to be arrested for violent crimes. Further, children left out of the program were four times more likely to be arrested for drug felonies by age 40, and seven times more likely to be arrested for possession of dangerous drugs. Children who participated in the Perry Preschool program were 44 percent more likely to graduate from high school compared to those left out of the program.

Another nationally recognized program, North Carolina's Smart Start, helps working parents pay for early child care and improve the quality of care through educational opportunities, resources, and educational materials for teachers. Researchers studying early education centers with Smart Start's quality improvement assistance found low-income children who were not enrolled were twice as likely

to have behavior problems such as aggressive acts and poor temper control, anxiety, and hyperactivity in kindergarten.

Head Start is the nation's premier school readiness program for children in poverty. Since 1965, it has provided voluntary, comprehensive education, social and emotional development, and physical and mental health services, as well as parent involvement efforts.

Research shows Head Start works for kids. Although a recent national study of Head Start found that the initial positive impacts of Head Start participation on language and literacy skills diminished by the end of first grade, other studies that followed Head Start children into adulthood, and long-term studies of other pre-kindergarten programs, have found notable long-term impacts. For example, one national study found that Head Start increased high school graduation rates by 7 percent for children in the program compared to their siblings not in the program but in other care, and decreased crime by 8.5 percent.

Head Start incorporates most of the key features of high-quality early education programs proven to cut crime, such as appropriate class-size and teacher-student ratios, comprehensive and age-appropriate early learning standards, related services (including health referrals), and parent involvement and coaching. That being said, it is imperative that we continue to make sure Head Start is incorporating the newest research and proven approaches to ensure the program is realizing the full potential that the early education research shows is possible. We note that, since that study was done, Head Start Reauthorization passed calling for important improvements, such as increasing the number of teachers who must have Bachelor's degrees. In recent years, Congress has taken great strides towards improving the quality of the program and reaching more of the eligible kids — that progress needs to continue on both fronts.

Early Head Start, created in 1994, provides comprehensive child development and family strengthening services for infants and toddlers from birth to age 3. Early Head Start provides these services through center-based, home-based, and combination program options.

Research shows that Early Head Start is effective. A randomized control study of over 3,000 families participating in 17 Early Head Start programs nationwide found that three-year-olds who had participated in Early Head Start, compared to their peers who did not, had higher levels of cognitive and language development, better attention to play, and lower levels of aggressive behavior (Love 2005). This finding on aggressive behavior relates directly to crime—research shows that sixty percent of children with high levels of disruptive, aggressive behaviors in early childhood will manifest high levels of antisocial and delinquent behavior later in life. Early Head Start also helps parents. Parents who participated in the program demonstrated more emotional supportiveness to their children, provided higher levels of language and learning stimulation, and read to their children more.

The evidence showing the crime-reducing impact of high-quality early care and education for at-risk kids is compelling, but I must also point out that these investments save the public money. For example, a cost-benefit analysis of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program showed that it saved \$16 for every \$1 spent (Schweinhart 2005).

Unfortunately, despite the proven benefits, years of chronic underfunding have resulted in overwhelming unmet need for high-quality early childhood care and education. Head Start is only able to serve about half of eligible children nationwide, while Early Head Start serves less than 5 percent of eligible infants and toddlers. The Child Care and Development Block Grant is only able to help 1 in 7 eligible low-income kids. The current economic climate only makes the problem worse: more kids are eligible for these programs and in need of these services but unable to access them, and states are cutting back their early care and education investments due to their budget shortfalls.

To ensure at-risk kids get the high-quality early care and education they need, I strongly urge you to increase funding for investments that have been proven to reduce later crime and violence by helping kids get the right start in life. **As you develop the FY 2011 appropriations package for the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services, I urge you to fund President Obama's proposed increase of nearly \$1 billion over FY 2010 levels for Head Start and Early Head Start, and to increase funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant by \$1 billion over FY 2010 levels.** The President's Budget Request proposed a \$1.6 billion increase in mandatory and discretionary funding for CCDBG in FY 2011.

As a law enforcement leader who has watched too many kids grow up to become criminals, I know these investments will make our communities safer. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this testimony.